

STANDING WEIGHT SHIFTS

Coaching awareness of body weight and movement while practicing weight shifts helps to improve balance. Multiple patterns of weight shifting make this exercise very effective.

Benefits »

- ⦿ Practices postural control during weight shifts.
- ⦿ Facilitates kinesthetic learning, listening to their body. I call it inside/out learning.
- ⦿ Provides a good and very practical early standing balance activity.

Set It Up »

You will not need any special equipment for this exercise.

How to Do It »

The Start

- ⦿ Participants stand behind a sturdy chair with good upright posture and with feet shoulder-width apart or slightly wider.
- ⦿ They place both hands on the chair; tightly, lightly, or hovered, as able. Some participants may be comfortable with only one hand on the chair. To start, be conservative and cue both hands on the chair.
- ⦿ Participants begin with their body weight equally distributed over both feet, with proper upright posture.

The Moves

Use the following cues.

- ⦿ Shift your weight toward the right foot then back to center, three to six times. Don't lean with the upper body, rather shift the whole, tall torso over the desired foot. Borrowing an expression from tai chi, the shift is like riding a horse, no leaning, the trunk just shifts to the side. Body stays upright.
- ⦿ Do three to six shifts to the left. Again, don't lean; instead, shift the whole upper body.
- ⦿ Change the foot position to a wider stance. Repeat the shifting, but add knee bends to the leg receiving the body weight. Do these weight shifts three to six times. Again, no leaning and keep the torso tall.
- ⦿ Change the foot position to an offset stance. Shift the weight forward and bend the front knee. Shift back and bend the back (receiving) knee. Repeat three to six times.
- ⦿ Change to an offset stance with the other foot in front and repeat the sequence.

Take It Further »

- ⦿ Hold each weight shift longer.
- ⦿ Widen the foot placement.



Give It More Balance »

- ⦿ Cue participants to lift the heel of the foot that is being *unweighted*. This will make each weight shift more complete.
- ⦿ Add arm reaches to the weight shifts to further increase the weight shifting effects.
 - Shift to the right, reach to the right with the left arm; and vice versa.
 - Ask if they notice how reaching up tends to re-center their balance.

Keep It Safe »

Keep participants near their support chair, with one arm available to grab it, if needed. Remind them that they can hold the chair tightly, lightly, or just hover their hands over it. Participants should use whatever balance support makes them comfortable.